

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A dried soft aerated confection food product, comprising:  
 about 65% to 98% of a saccharide component (dry weight basis);  
 about 0.05 to 15% of a foaming agent;  
 about 0.5% to 20% of a structuring agent; and,  
 1 to 10% moisture,  
 having  
     at least one color,  
     a density of about 0.1 to 0.35g/cc, and,  
     a water activity ranging from about 0.1 to about 0.4,  
 and sufficient amounts of a softening agent to provide a glass transition temperature of less than 20°C.
2. The aerated food product of claim 1 comprising about 1-25% (dry weight basis) of softening agent
3. The dried soft aerated food product of claim 1 wherein at least a portion of the foaming ingredient is protein based.
4. The dried soft aerated food product of claim 3 wherein at least a portion of the foaming ingredient or structuring agent is gelatin.
5. The dried soft aerated food product of claim 1 having a glass transition temperature of less than 5°C.
6. The dried soft aerated food product of claim 4 wherein both the foaming and structuring ingredient is gelatin.
7. The dried soft aerated food product of claim 1 having the ability of a 500 cm<sup>3</sup> quantity to compress to 50-85% of the original volume in 5 minutes due to the force imparted by a 1 kg weight.
8. The dried soft aerated food product of claim 2 wherein the softening agent is selected from the group consisting of polyglycerols, hydrogenated starch hydrolysates, glycerin, propylene glycol and mixtures thereof.
9. The dried soft aerated food product of claim 7 comprising:  
 about 65 to 98% of a saccharide component; and wherein at least a major portion of the saccharide component is sucrose;  
 about 0.5 to 10% of gelatin;

about 2 to 10% moisture; and,  
having a fat content of less than 5%.

10. The aerated food product of claim 8 in the form of shaped pieces each weighing about 0.1 to 10g.
11. The aerated food product of claim 10 in the form of shaped pieces each weighing about 0.1 to 0.2 g.
12. The food product of claim 10 wherein a major portion of the softening agent is glycerin.
13. The food product of claim 11 having a water activity ranging from about 0.2 to 0.3
14. The food product of claim 8 wherein the softening agent is selected from the group consisting of glycerin, propylene glycol and mixtures thereof.
15. The food product of claim 1 additionally comprising at least one ingredient selected from the group consisting flavor or color ingredients, nutritional fortifying ingredients, and mixtures thereof.
16. The food product of claim 15 wherein the nutritional fortifying ingredient is selected from the group consisting of biologically active components, fiber, micronutrients, minerals, and mixtures thereof.
17. The food product of claim 16 wherein the biologically active components is selected from the group consisting of nutraceuticals, medicinal herbs, therapeutic or ethical drugs, and mixtures thereof.
18. The food product of claim 16 including sufficient amounts of a calcium ingredient to provide a calcium concentration of about 0.1 to 5%.
19. The food product of claim 1 having a portion is of a second color.
20. The food product of claim 11 wherein the dried soft aerated food product is in the form of a phase or portion of a composite food product.
21. The food product of claim 20 wherein the dried soft aerated food product portion is in the form of a topical coating.
22. The food product of claim 20 wherein the dried soft aerated food product portion is in the form of filling.
23. The food product of claim 17 wherein the product includes at least one vitamin.

24. The food product of claim 20 wherein the product has at least two phases characterized by different colors, flavors or composition.
25. The food product of claim 17 in the form of a wafer.
26. The food product of claim 26 in the form of a wafer having a thickness of about 1 to 5 mm.
27. The food product of claim 26 wherein the dried soft aerated food product portion is in the form of a peripheral border.
28. The food product of claim 25 wherein the soft aerated food product portion is in the form of a peripheral border.
29. The food product of claim 22 wherein the dried soft aerated food product portion is in the form of core.
30. The food product of claim 30 admixed with a second dry food in particulate form.
31. The food product of claim 31 admixed with a ready-to-eat breakfast cereal.
32. The food product of claim 7 having a springback of 15% of the lost volume in an within 5 minutes.
33. The food product of claim 8 additionally comprising a high potency sweetener.
34. The food product of claim 33 wherein high potency sweetener includes sucralose.
35. The food product of claim 34 wherein the high potency sweetener is present in a concentration ranging from about 0.05% to 1%.
36. The food product of claim 1 in admixture with a ready-to-eat cereal.
37. The food product of claim 34 wherein the gelatin is 250 Bloom strength.
38. The food product of claim 1 having a moisture content of 2.0-2.5%.
39. The food product of claim 37 wherein the admixture is in bar form.

40. A method for preparing a dried soft aerated confectionery food product, comprising the steps of:
- A. providing a liquid confection blend including
    - About 50 to 95% (dry weight basis) of a saccharide component;
    - About 0.5% to 30% (dry weight basis) of a foaming ingredient
    - About 0.5 to 30% (dry weight basis) of a structuring agent; and,
    - About 1-15% (dry weight basis) of a softening agent;
    - About 15% to 30% moisture;
  - B. aerating the liquid confection blend to form an aerated confection plastic foam having a density of about 0.1 to 0.5/cc and a temperature of about 30 to 85°C (about 90 to 180°F) to form a foam;
  - C. extruding the aerated foam at a temperature of about 30 to 85°C (about 90 to 180°F) to form a plastic aerated confection extrudate;
  - D. cooling the extrudate to set the confection to form a set aerated confection extrudate ; and,
  - E. forming the set aerated confection extrudate into pieces; and,
  - F. drying the pieces to a water activity value ranging from about 0.1-0.4 to provide dried soft aerated confection pieces having a density of about 0.1-0.35 g/cc to form a soft dried aerated confection.
41. The method of claim 40 wherein the liquid confection blend comprises:  
about 5% to 25% of a softening agent component;
42. The method of claim 41 wherein both the foaming and structuring ingredient is gelatin.
43. The method of claim 42 wherein the dried soft composition has a fat content of less than 5%.
44. The method of claim 43 wherein the dried soft composition has a fat content of less than 0.5%.
45. The method of claim 44 wherein the softening agent is selected from the group consisting of polyglycerols, hydrogenated starch hydrolysates, glycerin, propylene glycol and mixtures thereof.
46. The method of claim 45 wherein the liquid confection blend includes about 65 to 98% of a saccharide component; and wherein at least a major portion of the saccharide component is sucrose.

47. The method of claim 46 wherein the forming step is practiced to form shaped pieces each weighing about 0.1 to 10g (dry weight basis).
48. The method of claim 47 wherein a major portion of the softening agent is glycerin.
49. The method of claim 40 wherein the liquid confection blend additionally includes at least one ingredient selected from the group consisting flavor or color ingredients, nutritional fortifying ingredients, and mixtures thereof.
50. The method of claim 49 wherein the wherein the nutritional fortifying ingredient is selected from the group consisting of biologically active components, fiber, micronutrients, minerals, and mixtures thereof.
51. The method of claim 50 wherein the biologically active components is selected from the group consisting of nutraceuticals, medicinal herbs, therapeutic or ethical drugs, and mixtures thereof.
52. The method of claim 50 wherein step A includes the sub-steps of  
water to form a syrup;  
heating the syrup to dissolve the sweeteners to about 75-120°C (about 170-250°F) to form a hot clear sugar syrup;  
hydrating the structuring agent in the balance of the moisture to form a hydrated structuring agent;  
cooling the hot sugar syrup to a temperature of 72°C or cooler to form a cooled sugar syrup; and  
admixing the hydrated structuring agent with the cooled sugar syrup to form the liquid confection blend.
53. The method of claim 47 wherein the forming step is practiced to form wafers having a thickness of about 1 to 5 mm.
54. The method of claim 46 wherein the structuring agent is selected from the group consisting of carrageenan gum, guar gum, agar, alginates and mixtures thereof and wherein the dried soft composition is free of gelatin.
55. The method of claim 54 in the form of a wafer.
56. The method of claim 55 in the form of a wafer having a thickness of about 1 to 5mm.

57. The method of claim 40 wherein the foaming agent is selected from the group consisting of sodium lauryl sulfate, hydroxypropyl methyl cellulose, and mixtures thereof.
58. The method of claim 56 wherein the soft aerated food product composition is in the form of a peripheral border.
59. The method of claim 53 wherein the dried soft aerated food product composition is in the form of core.
60. The method of claim 52 wherein the compositions are of differing colors.
61. The method of claim 60 additionally comprising the step of: admixing the pieces with a ready-to-eat breakfast cereal.
69. The method of claim 68 wherein the non proteinaceous agent is selected from the group consisting of sodium lauryl sulfate, hydroxypropyl methyl cellulose, and mixtures thereof.
70. The method of claim 69 wherein the structuring agent is selected from the group consisting of carrageenan gum, guar gum, agar, alginates and mixtures thereof and wherein the dried soft composition is free of gelatin.
71. The method of claim 69 wherein at least a portion of the structuring agent is gelatin.
72. The method of claim 69 wherein the aeration step is practiced to provide a foam having the density ranging from about 0.15 to 0.35g/cc.
73. The method of claim 69 wherein at least a portion of the foaming agent is hydroxy propyl methyl cellulose.
74. The method of claim 73 wherein the dried pieces have a piece count of about 2-6/g.
75. The method of claim 74 wherein at least a portion of the foaming agent is sodium lauryl sulfate
76. The method of claim 71 wherein the gelatin is high bloom strength gelatin.
77. The method of claim 40 wherein the slurry additionally comprises a high potency sweetener.
78. The method of claim 77 wherein the high potency sweetener comprises sucralose.